

TWO

DISCOURSES

ON

The grounds of the Christian's hope;

CONTAINING

A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE WORK OF GOD'S HOLY
SPIRIT IN A REMARKABLE REVIVAL OF RE-
LIGION IN WEST-HARTFORD, IN
THE YEAR 1799.

DELIVERED ON THE

FIRST SABBATH OF THE YEAR 1800.

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DISCOURSE I.

I PETER iii. 15.

BUT sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

ONE circumstance, in the Christian Religion, is worthy of particular notice, and serves to distinguish it from all other systems of Morals and Philosophy, antient or modern; and this is its directing, uniformly and invariably, the human mind to God as the fountain of all existence and blessedness, the only legitimate object of all religious fear, adoration, and praise. This is a circumstance in favour of its divine original which has in it, great weight of evidence. And this respect to be continually paid to the Supreme Being is, also, to be more than mere form, or a thing of course. It must go from the heart. Thus, in the words now read, we are called upon *from the heart* to pay all due respect and reverence, adoration and love, acknowledgments and praise to him. *Sanctify the*

Lord God in your hearts.—To sanctify the Lord God in our hearts is to fear, worship, serve, and obey the one true and living God, who is over all, blessed forevermore, in whom we live, move, and have our existence.

WE are, likewise, required, in the text, at all fit seasons, and warrantable occasions to afford others who may desire it, all proper information concerning the grounds of our hope in divine mercy and forgiveness, or that we are reconciled in the temper of our hearts to the divine character, and entertain the pleasing idea that we have in truth received the glorious Salvation of the Gospel. Or the meaning may be, that we are in duty obliged, whenever a fit occasion offers, to lay before them the evidences of our belief of the gospel as celestial in its origin, and that the scriptures of the Old and New-Testament are the word of God, authentic and genuine, and not the work of man's invention.—As this same Apostle elsewhere observes, *We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts. Knowing this first that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time, by the will of man: but holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.* Moreover—

THE reason of our hope of personal forgiveness, or our belief of revealed Religion is to be given, *with meekness and fear.* There ought to be great diffidence and caution lest we offend God and our

brethren—expose religion itself to unjust reproach—or prejudice others, who never felt its power, though admirers of its form, against it. *Meekness and fear*, here, stand opposed to forwardness, spiritual pride, and boastful confidence. The deceitfulness and treachery of the human heart make it proper for Christians to be always on their guard:—and always humble.

WHAT is intended, in further discoursing upon the words before us, is to explain the duty, here pressed upon Christians:—And then to accommodate the subject to the season, it being the first sabbath in a new year, and to the situation of this congregation, by recounting, in a concise manner, the very remarkable revival of Religion among us, during the year now closed.

THE duty here pressed upon Christians consists of two parts, the first is *sanctifying the Lord God in our hearts*; and the other is *giving a reason of the hope that is in us*, of an interest in the salvation of the Gospel, or of our belief of its truth, *with meekness and fear*.

THE first part of the duty here urged upon Christians, is *sanctifying the Lord God in our hearts*. And one thing implied in doing this, is acknowledging, and having a realizing sense of his being and attributes. No service rendered unto him, can be acceptable, or rational, but what flows from a sense that he is, and that he will reward all who diligently seek him. There must be a belief of his

existence. *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* All religion begins with God. A firm belief that there exists at the head of the universe one great, original, designing cause is the first principle of all religion. And this first intelligent cause is worthy of all possible adoration and praise. He is the Creator and preserver of all worlds. By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the hosts of them by the breath of his mouth. He stretched out the heavens over our heads as a curtain, and laid the foundations of the earth. He spake and it was done. He commanded and it stood forth. At his call the mighty frame of the created universe arose into being. The heavens declare his glory, and the firmament sheweth his handy work. He guides all the motions of the natural, and all the actions of the moral world. And his being must be realized in order to our *sanctifying him in our hearts*. He must be seen and acknowledged as the one only living and true God, who has all power, wisdom, knowledge, and goodness:—as existing in, and of himself—independent—eternal—and unchangeable.

AGAIN, the duty of *sanctifying the Lord God in our hearts* is making him our constant fear. We are always to feel a reverence of him, both in his being and attributes. Hence the following exhortation in the prophecy of Isaiah, *Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.* To *sanctify*, applied to God, signifies

to confess and celebrate that to be holy, which in itself was so before. A reverential regard to him, in all his adorable excellencies, therefore, comes into the very nature of the duty of *sanctifying* him. We are always to treat him, his being and perfections, with all possible reverence; and above all things else, to dread his anger, to all the fierceness of which we have exposed ourselves on account of our sins. *And fear not them*, says our blessed Lord, *which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.* It must be clear to all, that to maintain a constant and deep reverence of God is an essential ingredient, in the duty, now under consideration. To *sanctify the Lord God in our hearts* is to look up to him as infinitely holy and glorious; and in our lives, to pay a sacred regard to him, in all his adorable attributes. Such therefore as treat, with disrespect, his name, his Providence, his laws, his word, his ordinances, and sabbaths do not *sanctify him, in their hearts.*

It may be further observed, that the duty of *sanctifying the Lord God in our hearts*, is endeavouring to maintain a devotional frame of mind towards him, at all times; and whenever the stated seasons of the exercise of such a frame of heart return, actually engaging in it, with becoming fervour. If we feel that he alone is glorious in holiness and the only proper object of homage and adoration, we shall be sensible of the obligations under which we, and all rational creatures are to him. Living, therefore, in the daily exercise of a devotional tem-

per, and being ready to perform all the offices of piety, when the stated seasons of them return, or when divine Providence calls us, is undoubtedly implied in the duty of *sanctifying the Lord*. Such then as live in the allowed and habitual neglect of pious and devotional exercises, cannot be said to sanctify the Lord God in their hearts, or lives.

THE duty of sanctifying God in our hearts, again, implies that we actually choose him as our portion and hope. He is, in himself, infinitely worthy of all possible expressions of love, gratitude, admiration, and obedience:—infinitely worthy to be chosen as our supreme portion. We are perfectly safe when we make him our help and hope. *They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion which cannot be removed, but abideth forever.* He is the inexhaustible fountain of all goodness and glory. He is all-sufficient for our happiness: He has power to protect us, whatever may be our difficulties and embarrassments—wisdom to guide us into right paths—mercy to pardon us, however heinous our guilt—goodness to bless us and supply our wants, great as they may be—and grace to subdue the corruptions of our nature. His arm is able to save—his ear is ready to hear—and he never will leave or forsake those who choose him for their portion. His infinitely glorious attributes, indeed, render him the proper portion of the immortal mind. Sanctifying him in our hearts is choosing him as our God—our help—our dependence. The Lord is gracious and full of compassion; slow to anger; and of great mercy: The

Lord is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works. He is, consequently, infinitely worthy to be chosen as a portion. He is possessed of all possible excellencies, over all, blessed forever more. Happy, then, must all be who have chosen him for their God!

THE other part of the duty urged upon Christians, in the words before us, is being always ready and willing to give an answer *to every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in them, with meekness and fear.*

THE hope here intended is no doubt a hope of pardoning mercy and salvation—of peace with God, or the Christian's hope. If the hope here spoken of mean a belief of the truth of the Gospel, yet it chiefly intends a hope of a personal interest in the invaluable blessings of the Gospel, and the salvation which it offers. Entertaining such a hope, we should be willing to have others know the grounds, upon which it is built. They may, with great propriety, ask us the reason of our hope—why we allow ourselves to expect salvation—why we trust pardon hath been extended to us. It is true that many times, others in proposing the question may have an ill and captious design.—Where it is apparent that the question originates from improper motives, from an ill design, or captious temper, and where there is no prospect of doing good an answer may be withholden. But whenever duty requires us to give a reason of the hope

that is in us, it must be done, with *meekness and fear*; a fear lest we communicate wrong ideas and impressions;—lest we prejudice others against experimental godliness—and lest we ourselves, thro' the deceitfulness and treachery of our own hearts, be built up in spiritual pride. Diffidence, meekness, and caution should ever accompany our reason of the hope that is in us. Because every thing which looks like ostentation, spiritual pride and self-conceit in religion is peculiarly odious. Whenever we undertake, consequently, to declare our hopes of divine mercy, or to state our views and feelings in respect to Religion, it should be done as mentioned by the Apostle, *with meekness and fear*.

THE pious Psalmist professes himself to be ready to inform all who feared God, or where there was any favorable prospect of good to be accomplished, what views and sense he had of divine things, Psal. lxxvi. 16. *Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul*.—He made no objections against imparting to others, his sense of divine things, where it might be done with propriety. To open, however, your views and experience of divine things before the profane and impious, or at improper times, would be injuring the cause of the Redeemer, and unnecessarily exposing his Religion to reproach. We have the express prohibition of the glorious founder of our holy Religion on this point—*Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine lest they trample them under their feet and turn again and rent you*.

It is not only, we conceive, according to scripture, but consonant to the laws of benevolence, to impart to others when time, place and circumstances render it fit, the hope which we have of salvation, and the grounds upon which it stands. If it be deemed altogether right to impart for the benefit of the world, important discoveries in any useful arts and sciences, why should it be thought improper to communicate the hopes of forgiveness, which we may cherish, together with the reasons of them? If a neighbour or an acquaintance had passed from a state of ignorance and rude and savage manners, to much useful information and knowledge—or from deep poverty and narrow circumstances, to ease and affluence—or from a low and private station, to respectability and honour—or from extreme sickness and distress of body, to health and soundness would not the change be mentioned with pleasure? Would not the event be quickly known abroad, and be celebrated by all, except the envious and malicious? Why, then, should a change infinitely more important and interesting be concealed; or why should it be thought wrong or a mark of spiritual pride to mention it? May we not speak of the change, when it is spiritual and moral—a passing from death unto life—being turned from sin unto holiness—being brought out of darkness into marvellous light in the Lord?

WHENEVER a work of divine grace, through the convictive and regenerating influence of the Holy Ghost, takes place among a people, an account or narrative, concisely drawn up, of such a

work, may subserve many happy and important purposes. All the praise and glory of it ought to be ascribed where due, to him, who doth all things according to the counsel of his own will : Who, as a perfect sovereign, works when, how, and where it seemeth him good. All blessings, indeed, whether temporal or spiritual, come from him as the overflowing fountain : Every good and perfect gift proceedeth from the *Father of lights*, with whom there is no variableness or so much as shadow of turning. He will have mercy, on whom he will have mercy. He grants his Holy Spirit as seemeth good in his sight, to render effectual upon the hearts and consciences of people, the ministrations of the Gospel. Whatever instruments are honoured in accomplishing his gracious designs, his is the power ; and his should be all the glory.— Paul may plant and Apollos water, but he giveth the increase. When he has designs of good for individuals or a congregation of his people, or spiritual blessings to impart, he will employ such means as, in his sovereign will, are agreeable to his infinite wisdom.

To lay before the mind a just and faithful narrative of a work of God's Holy Spirit in bringing the careless and hardened sinner to attend to his salvation, with all seriousness and diligence, and to embrace cordially the glorious Redeemer :—Or when many—very considerable numbers are thus affected by a general attention, must redound greatly to the honour of religion ;—is a delightful proof of the truth of the Gospel ;—is a clear display of

its power ;—must enliven the zeal of pious Christians—animate their affections—bring them to the throne of grace in fervent prayers and praises—be the occasion of thanksgivings unto God from many ;—and of the advancement of his glory. The many valuable purposes, therefore, which may be answered by such an ACCOUNT are a sufficient reason, why it ought not to be omitted. A congregation of worshipping Christians ought carefully to notice all divine Providences to them. If afflictive, to be humble under them. If prosperous, to be thankful for them. If general health have been enjoyed by them, while other places have been visited with wasting sickness and great mortality, it ought not to be forgotten. The more important likewise the blessings conferred, the higher do the obligations of gratitude rise, and the more need to be duly appreciated. Temporal mercies, important and great as they may be, are not to be compared to spiritual.

There are, likewise, times and seasons peculiarly fitted for the purpose of directing the minds of a whole congregation to the special operations of God's Providence or grace. Such are the present season and occasion. We are now entered upon another year of our lives. This being the first sabbath in it, a brief recapitulation of the chief mercies of God to you, the year now closed, may teach—awaken—quicken—and impress you.—Upon a retrospective view of the many favours of God, both temporal and spiritual to us, we may well address our souls, as the pious Psalmist doth, in the fol-

lowing words—*Bless the Lord O my soul : and all that is within me, bless his holy name : Bless the Lord O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.*

EVERY thing indeed which may be conducive to the good of souls, in a spiritual sense, or tend to promote the interest and credit of the Redeemer's kingdom, or to advance the cause of piety and morality, ought to meet the wishes of the friends of Zion. Most ungrateful and base would a people be to forget the work of divine grace, in calling up their attention to things heavenly, through the ministrations of the SANCTUARY. In truth, the preaching of the doctrines of religion, in their purity and with plainness, is the most powerful mean of building up the peace and happiness of mankind :—Of this you would have a full conviction, were you to be eye-witnesses of the striking difference, between a people who enjoy, and those who do not enjoy, the advantages and light of the Christian dispensation.—We may, indeed, well weep in the sadness of our hearts, that so many, who sit under the light of the glorious Gospel, are so hardened in impenitence and wilful neglect of duty.—But for our encouragement, may we not conclude that, wherever the means of grace are granted, or the truths of Christianity are justly and clearly exhibited, there they are more or less prospered. The visible success attending them is frequently next to nothing : The seed sown seems to perish in the earth—God's ministering servants seem to labour in vain, and spend their strength for nought.—They take up this heart-rending lamenta-

tion, *Lord who hath believed our report, or whom is the arm of the Lord revealed!* They cry out, often, with the prophet Jeremiah, who was greatly discouraged by his want of success—*O that mine head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!* But nevertheless, even, in times of general deadness and inattention as to religion, there may be many, on whose hearts, though unknown to all around them, the Gospel dispensed may have its desired effect. For the faithful dispensation of the Gospel is at all times more or less successful. Some are awakened, though they never disclose their feelings to their nearest friends.—Some are convinced of their danger from sin, and groan in secret. Some are savingly enlightened, and experience the renewing power of the Holy Ghost, though they dare not admit a hope of their interest in the atoning blood of a precious Redeemer. Others are edified, confirmed, and comforted: are enabled to give a reason of *the hope that is in them with meekness and fear.*

BUT at some peculiarly happy seasons never to be forgotten, but to be remembered with admiring joy, and adoring thankfulness, it pleases a gracious and merciful God, in the riches of his goodness, to bow the heavens and come down by his Holy Spirit to a congregation. He clothes the means of grace with wonderful power. A spirit of prayer is given, in a surprising manner: Heavenly dews softly descend, and enliven the fields of Zion.—Nay, mighty showers of grace are poured out. The Father of

mercies, a sovereign God, opens his treasures of awakening, convincing, and renewing influence; causing it to rain on one city and not on another, and who says, *I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessings upon thine offspring. And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say I am the Lord's, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his own hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.*—God's word is as a fire to melt, and a hammer to break the rock in pieces. The peculiar and discriminating doctrines of the Gospel, when the influence of the Holy Spirit accompanies them, have a wonderful force. *For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

SUCH as never had the happiness to see, among a people, a general attention to Religion, or to be witnesses of a revival of it, can hardly realise the astonishing alteration which it makes, or have any very adequate idea of it. They will, with difficulty, be led to conceive it possible, that the Gospel, in its ministrations, should be so powerful. We find, also, some who have the distinguished lot of being in the midst of such a scene, wholly neglect, either through conceit of their own rank in society, or pretended multiplicity, importance, and crowding nature of worldly business, or mere slothful-

ness, to see it, or coolly and candidly examine the fact. A few, moreover, either actually do, or affect to disbelieve the whole, imputing what is uncommon, either to enthusiasm—sympathy—the power of imagination—or to strains of pathetic eloquence, in the Minister of the Gospel, or to subjects of terror set before the mind, in glowing language—or the operation of animal affections, or some other equally inadequate cause. Such will not come and see. They keep at a distance from every thing of this kind. If they would lay aside all prejudice, and carefully examine for themselves, they would soon be satisfied. But the misfortune is that such are their prejudices, or perverse sentiments, that they cannot endure the thought of seeing or hearing any thing like experimental Religion. Unhappy is it for themselves, for society and for real piety that they have imbibed the notion, that all Religion consists only in mere external observances, and a life visibly moral and decent. While actuated by these views and sentiments, they will, of course, be implacable enemies to a revival of Religion, or a work of conviction and conversion. If any who hear me, have any doubts about the reality of such a work, a serious and diligent perusal of the scriptures, and a candid and patient examination of the nature of the Gospel, would, it is apprehended, entirely remove them. Let the following accounts, on divine record, be here well weighed, of several instances of the wonderful power of a preached word, in

different places. Upon critically examining these, penned by inspiration, we shall see a striking coincidence with all genuine revivals of Religion, at any time, and among any people, in any part of the Christian world.—For it is the same grace of God which renders the Gospel successful in one age, place, and heart equally as another.

IN *SAMARIA*, we have a narrative of a work of divine grace, where the glorious Gospel preached by Philip, an evangelist, was rendered effectual, by the effusions of the Holy Spirit. A Christian church was there gathered.—When a furious persecution was commenced against the church in Jerusalem, Philip went down to Samaria, and preached the Gospel. The people heard the word with great joy, and spared no pains to be, where it was to be spoken. They were all attention to it; solicitous to learn the way of salvation and life. By the convictive operations of the Holy Ghost they were brought under awakenings. Their religious impressions greatly affected them, and terminated, in many cases, happily. The effects evidenced the reality of their faith and repentance. We are told that many believed the Gospel; and were added to the church—and received the holy sacrament of baptism. Acts viii. 5—8. *Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. And there was great joy in that city.—But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of*

Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women.

AT *ANTIOCH*, likewise, the word preached was remarkably succeeded by the awakening and renewing power of God's Holy Spirit. The Ministers of the Gospel, who carried the good news of pardon and life to that place, found mercy to be successful. The people were deeply attentive. Many, after an anxious solicitude about their everlasting salvation, were made the subjects of the renewing grace of God. In consequence of their cordially embracing the Gospel, they took upon themselves, a public profession of religion—joined the church—and received Christian baptism. *Acts xi. 21—25.* *And the hand of the Lord was with them, the Ministers of the Gospel, and a GREAT NUMBER believed and turned unto the Lord. Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church in Jerusalem. And they sent forth Barnabas that he should go as far as Antioch. Who when he was come, and had seen the grace of God, was glad; and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith; and much people were added unto the Lord. A large accession was made to the church. Such as entertained a hope that they had been brought from sin to holiness, and been the subjects of a work of the sanctification of the Holy Ghost, made a profession of Religion, joined the church, and received the holy ordinances. But the word of God grew and prevailed. The people were all earnestness and engagedness to hear the word. They were deeply*

affected with it. By the concurring influence of grace, the truths spoken were successful on the heart. Sister-churches partook in the joy. The pious labors of God's ministering servants were owned. What is worthy of particular notice here is that there was apparently no open opposition to the power and prevalence of the Gospel, in either of these places. But, on the contrary, great satisfaction and pleasure. The people were, cheerfully and harmoniously, attentive to the preaching of the word, and greatly rejoiced to behold its benign effect on the heart and life. For a reformation of morals always attends a revival of religion. *And there was great joy in that city.*

AT THESSALONICA, the preaching of Paul and Silas was remarkably blessed by the attending influence of the Holy Ghost, though a most unreasonable and violent opposition was raised, by base and lewd men, against the Religion of Christ, and his Ministers—against the Gospel, and its obtaining credit and power among any of the people. But man, however inimical to the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, cannot stop their progress, or prevent others from feeling their force. For notwithstanding the violent enmity against the Religion of Jesus, many of both sexes, and among the most respectable, were exceedingly attentive, became deeply impressed with a sense of divine things—hopefully obtained pardon—and were the happy subjects of a work of sanctification on the heart. Acts xviii. 1—5. *Now when they had passed through Amphipolis, and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica where was a*

synagogue of the Jews. And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures. Opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead : and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ. And some of them believed and consorted with Paul and Silas ; and of the devout Greeks a GREAT multitude, and of the chief women NOT A FEW.

AT BEREÄ, a similar attention to Religion is related in the sacred pages. The same Gospel was efficacious—the same God adored—the same Saviour received—and the same profession of faith made. The most respectable people of that place heard the word with joy. Such, too, as were careful to attend upon the preaching of the word, and the seasons and opportunities devoted to religious worship, were greatly moved ; and many of them effectually called. But such, as either wholly neglected, or openly opposed the work, were left of God, in his righteous and sovereign Providence, to remain stupid and hardened in sin, impenitence, and unbelief. It is particularly noticed of the converts at Berea, that they manifested the genuineness of the work, by a diligent and faithful perusal of the holy scriptures. And in all places, where it has pleased a gracious and merciful God, to excite, by his spirit, any uncommon attention to Religion, an abundant reading of the inspired volume, and constancy and engagedness of mind, in waiting upon God in all his instituted means of religious instruction, are equally observable. Acts xvii. 10, 11, 12,

And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea, who coming thither went into a synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those of Thessalonica in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so. Therefore MANY of them believed, also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of MEN NOT A FEW.

BUT the historian informs us, that the enemies of the work at Thessalonica, were not contented with abusing, insulting, and belying the Preachers of the Gospel, at home; but, to such extreme lengths did their malice carry them, that they went to Berea, and exerted themselves all in their power to put a stop to the work there. How preposterous their zeal against the Gospel! and by what a mad persecuting spirit were they actuated!

AT CORINTH, a most furious opposition showed itself, against the regular Ministers of Christ for preaching the plain, and powerful doctrines of the Gospel. The enemies of Religion always manifest their malice against God and Christ, by singling out his Ministers as the objects of their implacable rage. No falsehoods are too gross for them to attempt to spread, nor hatred too deadly for them to exercise. But mighty is the power of Gospel-truth: its glorious doctrines will have an effect on the heart. Even in Corinth, though so many opposed and blasphemed, still NUMBERS believed: were convinced of the danger and guilt of sin: and were brought to a saving knowledge of God in Christ. In consequence of a hopeful change of

heart by regenerating grace, they joined the church, by a public profession of Religion; and received the holy sacrament of baptism. Acts xviii. 8. *And Crispus the chief ruler of the synagogue believed on the Lord with all his house: and MANY of the Corinthians, hearing, believed, and were baptized.*

WE have the following narrative of a work of God's Holy Spirit at *EPHESUS*. The preaching of the Gospel, in that place, was remarkably blessed. Many were visited with awakenings and convictions. And were savingly wrought upon by divine grace. As the natural and necessary effect, they forsook their idolatrous and evil practices. They made an open confession of their scandalous crimes, and shameful deeds, in following the magical art. They PUBLICLY professed their faith in Christ. The Gospel preached had the same benign influence upon them, as it has in all ages and places where the divine spirit is poured out in his awakening and renewing power. But an opposition arose, here, also. Idolaters, and such as acquired a living or gain from idolatrous practices, set themselves to oppose the Gospel, by reviling its Ministers, the usual resort of all envious and wicked enemies to the Gospel itself, and its divine Author. Acts xix. 17, 18, 19, 20. *And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus, and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And MANY that believed, came and confessed, and shewed their deeds. MANY also of them which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of*

them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed.

In these several accounts of a work of divine grace, in scripture, in different places, a great uniformity, in the effects of the work, and the manner of it, is very observable. And those scripture-narratives, I have very briefly rehearsed, to show the importance, as well as nature of a work of God's Holy Spirit, among a people ; and to justify the giving an account of such a work wherever it may, in the infinite goodness of God, be granted. Facts are of the highest consequence to mankind in teaching them the real nature of religion. If we would learn the nature of any thing, in the clearest manner, we must go where that nature is acted out. A desire to know what effect the Gospel has upon others is very commendable. And how great the coincidence is between the work of grace to be related, in the sequel, and the above scripture-accounts, must be left to the candid hearer to judge.

DISCOURSE II.

I PETER iii. 15.

BUT sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

IN discoursing upon these words it was proposed to explain the duty here pressed upon Christians—and then to accommodate the subject to the season and the situation of this Congregation, by recounting, in a concise manner, the very remarkable revival of Religion among us, during the year now closed.

THE duty here pressed upon Christians, it was observed, consisted of two parts, *Sanctifying the Lord God in our hearts*; and giving an answer to such as desire a reason of the hope that is in us of pardon and salvation, *with meekness and fear*. After explaining the duty, the way is prepared to attend to the main design in view, to give you some general account of the work of divine grace, in this congregation, the season past.

THREE remarks respecting this work tending to place it, in a true light, should be here made.

THE first is, the very great uniformity in the views, feelings, and impressions of those, who have been the subjects of it. This is no slight evidence of its being a real and genuine work of the grace of God. For if true Religion be the same in all who possess it : If the human heart, in its natural state, be equally depraved in all : If the gospel be the same in its design and power : If its doctrines be the same at all times ; and if God's Holy Spirit be the same in his operations, this consequence must necessarily follow that the views, feelings, and impressions both under religious awakenings, and those convictions which commonly precede renovation, and in conversion will be uniform, or very similar. They will indeed be in kind, though not in degree, exactly alike. Differing in many circumstances, they will be substantially the same. A very great uniformity has been observable, which is a proof that the work is not apocryphal. If it had been the effect merely of enthusiasm, or of a heated imagination, it is not at all probable there would have been such an uniformity.

ANOTHER remarkable circumstance attending the work is its great regularity. The whole progress of it, from the first commencement of it until the present day, has been distinguished by order, peace, union, and sedateness. There have been no divisions, heresies, envyings, contentions, separations, visions, trances, and impulses. No hard judging, rash censoriousness, and unchar-

itableness. All, who were under serious concern about their salvation, even when most deeply affected, manifested no disposition to have others see and know their distress, though very often so great as almost to overwhelm them. We had no outcries, falling down—or bodily agitations. Such things often, through the temptations of a subtle adversary, mingle with, and disgrace revivals of religion, and lead others to oppose and condemn the whole, making no discriminations between the precious metal and the dross. Things of this nature when found attending any uncommon seriousness, are to be lamented, but ought not to induce us to reject or discredit the whole. Many wise and eminent Divines and Christians saw so much fanaticism, disorder, divisions, and bodily affections, in the extraordinary work, in this land, in the years 1741-42 as to lead them to condemn and reject the whole as mere delusion and enthusiasm. But, it is believed, that even the most uncandid and infidel mind, if an actual witness, could not point out one instance in the present case of what might, with any propriety, be termed enthusiasm. Through ignorance of the nature of Religion, and because they will not fairly see and examine, the enemies of God and the Gospel, it is well known, call all serious and real piety by the opprobrious names of fanaticism and superstition. Such as never felt any cordial esteem for vital piety, usually, are not wanting in attempts to load it, with contempt and scorn. The work of God's Holy Spirit, among us, has been exceedingly regular : It has been all of a piece : One contin-

ued unfolding of the power of truth : A display of the efficacy of the peculiar and distinguishing doctrines of the glorious Gospel : Christ has seemed to come forth in the riches of his grace : To ride in the chariots of salvation : His word has been powerful indeed. O what attention ! what solemnity ! In what glory and majesty did Christ appear ! *Behold*, says the prophet Malachi speaking of the majesty and grace of Christ, *I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me : and the Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple ; even the messenger of his covenant whom ye delight in : Behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming ? and who shall stand when he appeareth ? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap. And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver ; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years.*

THE only further remark here necessary in order to give a just representation of the work, is the visibly good fruits and beneficial tendency of it already exhibited ; and which will, no doubt, more and more appear. No religion is of any worth or can be genuine, which does not mend the heart, and reform the life. The tree is known to be good, in the world of nature, by the good fruit which it bears. The beauty of holiness is its tendency to happiness, and the glory of religion is the blessed effect which it has on the heart and life. It

is good as it does good—makes better men—better citizens—a happier world. It does good in this world, as well as prepares for felicity in the next. If the Gospel have been received as it ought to be, by any of the children of men, there will be a visible alteration in the life, the general deportment. Morality, indeed, is built upon religion as its only sure and solid foundation. No real piety of heart can exist, of course, without moral virtue. Justice, temperance, sobriety, and all the amiable train of moral virtues flow from the fear of God: From faith and repentance. If we fear God, we shall keep his commandments. If we love him, we shall be truly benevolent towards man. If we love Christ and believe in him we shall follow his example, and imitate him, in meekness and humility. If we have holiness of heart, there will most certainly be holiness of life. If we have religion in the heart, it will show itself in a well-ordered conversation. We are created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, which were before ordained that we should walk in them. *This is a faithful saying, and I will that thou constantly affirm, that they which have believed in God, be careful to maintain good works, for these are good and profitable unto men.* The fruit of holiness will always be found, where there is the implantation of the principle. A reformation in morals among a people is the only proof, upon which any manner of dependence either can, or ought to be placed, of a real work of grace. And the outward reformation here in those who have been affected, has been in proportion to the work

of God's Holy Spirit. Vice is avoided by them as odious.—Virtue is revered as amiable. Evil practices are shunned. Charity, kindness, condescension, and a forgiving temper are nourished. Slander and backbiting disesteemed. Rioting, dissipation, and vicious amusements are not seen. Profaneness, one of the crying sins of the land, and on account of which the land mourneth is greatly discountenanced and suppressed. Peace, union, Christian harmony and friendship obtain. Envy, malice, and hatred in a good degree have disappeared. The holy scriptures are more generally esteemed, and abundantly read. Public worship and divine ordinances are more highly venerated, and exemplarily attended. Knowledge in religion has been surprizingly increased and diffused. Prayer, both private and social, is set up and constantly performed.—How many more praying individuals, and praying families! The morning and evening sacrifice, oh how delightful the idea, ascends to the throne of the universe, to a prayer-hearing God, from many a heart and house, where heretofore nothing of the kind was known. Divine and precious ordinances are both honoured and devoutly solemnized. The gospel is not only admired and revered, but openly professed. A general seriousness, visible to every eye, has been spread over the congregation. How are morality and virtue esteemed, loved, and pursued! How is sin mourned over, as the source of all our miseries, rendering us loathsome to a holy God! How is a Saviour's name adored, and salvation sought!—What deep

attention in God's house ! What desire and readiness to hear divine truths ! How much more valued are moral and religious instructions and institutions ? Such outward reformation clearly discovers the genuineness of the work. Can the effect exist without the cause ?—Can plenteous streams flow, where there is no fountain ? As proofs of the good effects of this work of grace, a regard to, and sanctification of the holy sabbath, and an affectionate love to, and solemnization of the sacraments of the Gospel, have been mentioned. And they have been mentioned, because a denial of the sabbath—of stated prayer—of the holy ordinances—and of the ministry of the word is considered by the most judicious and knowing Christians, as a real denial of all religion, and a full evidence of a destitution of its principles.

IN the course of the work of grace among us, a very becoming and steady zeal has been manifested to all gospel-institutions. Since the commencement of the seriousness, above ninety have received the ordinance of Christian baptism ; and many of them adults. Parents, as well as children, have received that sacrament, so plainly instituted by the glorious Saviour, and so constantly administered by the Apostles, under inspiration, to their converts as the initiatory ordinance—as we have seen, in the accounts which are given us, of the revival of religion, in sundry places, briefly recited in the former discourse. How affecting to see parents first offering themselves, and then their households, after the scripture-pattern, at the altar, to receive

Christian baptism ! The accession to the communion of the church has been very great. One hundred and eight, since the commencement of this uncommon attention to religion, have joined themselves to the Lord, by a public profession. And a number more propose soon, by the leave of Providence, to manifest, in the same public manner, their regard to Christ and his precious ordinances. Such are some of the visible fruits of this work of grace already exhibited. And such the reformation which is its result.

— ONE would be ready to conclude, that all hearers would be pleased, though from different motives, with a recital of the principal facts which have characterised this mighty influence of the Gospel upon the heart and conscience. Those who love a Redeemer's name, and to whom his salvation is dear, will feel the warmest emotions of fervent gratitude to God, as the all-wise disposer of events, the fountain of grace and glory. Those whose hearts have been deeply affected will weep with joy, at the retrospective view of what they have both seen and felt. Such as have no more than an outward respect for the Gospel, and have been accustomed to look up to Religion, as an honoured and revered name, will receive new impressions in its favour, it may be hoped. Such as are enemies to, and disbelievers in the power of godliness will see clear evidence of the truth of the Gospel, and of the efficacy of free sovereign grace. Facts will be stated, with fairness and candor ; and under a conviction that it is more eligible to come

short, than to exceed in the detail. For false zeal is never productive of good, but often of mischievous effects. Hear, therefore, and judge for yourselves.

It is now nearly a century, since the first settlements were made in this place. Invited by the pleasantness of the situation and fertility of the soil, worthy and respectable families from the town fixed there residence here. The first inhabitants lived several years, without enjoying the stated ministrations of the Gospel, because not numerous enough to be able to bear the expense of its decent support. They, accordingly, attended public worship on Lord's day, as often as convenience admitted, in the town from which they had recently removed. A church consisting of twenty-nine members was gathered some time antecedent to the ordination of a stated Minister of the Gospel, in said church. After a suitable length of time to be well satisfied of his qualifications for the evangelical ministry, they chose the Rev. BENJAMIN COLTON for their Pastor. On the 24th of February 1713, he was solemnly set apart, by ordination, to the work of the Christian Ministry over them. He laboured in word and doctrine for the space of forty-four years. Being unable any longer on account of the weight of years, and infirmities of body to perform the arduous duties of his sacred office, after making trial of several candidates for the Gospel ministry, the eyes of the people were, at length, fixed on the Rev. NATHANIEL HOOKER,

who was ordained over the church and congregation December 21, 1757. The Rev. Mr. COLTON died March 1, 1759. And the Rev. Mr. HOOKER eleven years after, June 11, 1770. He was called off from his work in the prime and flower of life. His popular talents endeared him to his people, and his literary taste made him agreeable to his acquaintance.

IN the year 1745, in the time of the great revival of Religion in New-England, and various other parts, in the term of one year, forty-two were added to the church, thirty-six of whom were females. This was under the ministry of the first Pastor. The irregularities and enthusiasm of that truly wonderful day offended many, and brought a reproach on the work. But it would be uncharitable to condemn the whole, because there were impure mixtures. The next largest number added to the communion of the church, in one year, was eleven: This was in 1763, under the ministry of my immediate predecessor. And since my ministry commenced among you, before this year, the largest number added to the communion of the church, in one year, was sixteen, which was in the year 1781. The average number of admissions to the communion of the church, for ninety years, is five, and a little above. Since the first embodying of the church the aggregate sum of admissions into communion has been four hundred sixty-eight, before the present extraordinary attention to Religion began here. And since this, the admissions have been one hundred and eight; and it is expected

several more will soon come forward, and manifest their regard to religion, by a public profession. After a due time for close self-examination, and establishment in the ways of God, such as have obtained a hope of reconciliation to the divine character, and of a cordial reception of the salvation of the Gospel, have expressed an earnest desire to honour God and divine ordinances, by a public profession of their faith. The admissions into communion, since this season of religious attention, have been almost one fourth part of the number of admissions, for ninety years. The whole number of admissions, during the ministry of the Rev. Mr. COLTON, which was forty-four years of active service, was two hundred and sixty-three. During the ministry of the Rev. Mr. HOOKER, which was thirteen years, the admissions were sixty-five. And since my pastoral relation to you, for twenty-six years, the admissions exclusive of the past year have been one hundred and forty—and as above stated, one hundred and eight, within the compass of one year past.

It may be useful to add here, that the deaths or funerals, for ninety years, which is the length of time this people have been an ecclesiastical society, according to the laws of the state, are one thousand : The baptisms two thousand : The admissions five hundred and seventy-six. There have been more than half as many admissions as deaths.—At a medium, the admissions have been five, before this season of religious attention ; the deaths eleven ; and the baptisms twenty. The general state of re-

ligion, it hence appears, for ninety years, has been nearly the same, except in the time of the general seriousness in the country in 1741. The statement above made, and I believe it is correct, serves to evince the importance of the past season: For the admissions into the communion of the church have been equal, according to this statement, to twenty-two years, upon an average, for ninety years together. If we allow as much sincerity in these, as in former admissions, and charity cannot forbear to allow, at least, as much, we shall have a very favorable opinion of the work of the Lord, and feel what a delightful occasion we have of pious gratitude. It is, most certainly, a pleasing and profitable reflection to think, that when you look back upon your own history, since you were first a people, that the admissions into the communion of the church have been more than half as many as the deaths. This is not what I should, by any means, have imagined until actual enumeration. And the fact may besides answer the valuable purpose of enlarging our charity. The above sketch of your own history, in regard to religion, must be interesting to you all, especially to the rising generation. No hearer, it is presumed, however judicious, could have formed any correct idea of the proportion between the deaths, admissions, and baptisms, without an actual computation, from authentic records. This view, also, gives some useful information concerning the state of religion, and beneficial and happy effects of the ministrations of the Gos-

pel ; as well as interesting lessons concerning human nature.

THERE never has been before the present any very great revival of religion here since the first gathering of the church. Some years and seasons, indeed, there has been more attention or regard to it, than others.—Such a year as the past this people never saw. And probably never will, while any of us now before God, in his house of prayer, are living. O that we might see many such happy revolving years!—Few congregations are ever so highly favored as to experience such a day of divine grace and the mighty power of the Gospel. Few persons ever have the happiness to live in such a day ; or to be witnesses of such a scene. But blessed are our eyes for they have seen, and our ears for they have heard ! *Praise ye the Lord !—Let us lift up our hands in the sanctuary, and bless the name of the Lord !*

THE past year has, likewise, been distinguished for a similar work of grace, in many places around us—and in various other parts of the United States. The Holy Spirit has been vouchsafed, in an unusual manner, to accompany and bless the means of grace.—The heavenly dews of divine influence have fallen, like the natural rain on grass, newly mown.—The prayers of the friends of piety, for success to the preached word, have been remarkably answered. Multitudes and multitudes, a goodly number, have been gathered into the family and kingdom of Christ. Upon Zion a glory hath shined. The walls of Jerusalem have been built up,

Saints have been quickened and refreshed. Sinners have been converted. God has been glorified. Here the blaspheming atheist has been brought to adore and love that God, whose very being he had before denied. There the scoffing infidel has bowed to that divine Redeemer, whom before he had utterly renounced, and has placed his hopes of pardon and salvation in that atoning blood, that peace-making and life-giving blood which he had before reproached, with cruel malice. Here the visionary denier of the penalty of the divine law, and the punishment of the incorrigibly wicked in another life, has hastened to renounce his errors, and trembled lest his sins should bring him into that place of torment, which before he had viewed as the vain dream of superstition. There the profane, impious abandoned transgressor, hardened in vice, a professed contemner of things sacred, has been brought to admire, delight in, and receive that Gospel, of which he had, all his life, made light. Such characters, seemingly the furthest off from all mercy, have felt the power of quickening grace, and exclaimed in wonder and gratitude, "Salvation O the joyful sound ! O for a thousand tongues to speak the Redeemer's praises !"

For several years past, errors and heresies have prevailed, in the United States, to an astonishing degree ; owing, no doubt to a variety of causes, and among others to the corruption of morals during our revolutionary war ; and to the amazing scenes unfolded on the theatre of Europe ; and to the number of loose, infidel, and atheistical publi-

cations scattered over this country, in its whole length and breadth, by the votaries of MODERN PHILOSOPHY, and the NEW THEORIES of Liberty and Equality. Piety seemed to be flying away from our land—Religion declined—morality languished—vice grew bold—profaneness, revelling, dishonesty and sinful amusements rapidly increased—universalism—infidelity—atheism—scoffing at all serious godliness—contempt of the holy sabbath—desertion of public worship—omission of family-religion—and disregard of divine ordinances have spread, in a degree, which call for tears of grief, threatening, in their progress, to lay waste all the most valuable interests of society.

THE people of this congregation did not wholly escape the widely diffusing contagion. Since my pastoral connection with you, you have been noted for order, peace, good agreement, among yourselves, and general attendance on the public worship of the Deity. A few individuals excepted, all were steady and exemplary in so important a duty. Dangers have here however threatened the interest of religion. Endeavours have not been wanting to cast an odium upon it by an open and avowed denial of the sabbath—stated public worship—stated family-prayer—holy ordinances—regeneration by the power of sovereign grace—faith in a crucified Redeemer—justification through his righteousness—free pardon—and the scriptures of the Old and New-Testament, as the PRIMARY rule and only standard of belief and practice. There have been for several years it must be owned, a general cold-

ness, deadness, and inattention to the Gospel.—There appeared to be less regard to vital practical godliness than common, for sometime; and the admissions into the communion were no more than five, for the whole of the four past years.—It seemed as if God had almost intirely withdrawn his gracious influence. We were left to mourn an absent God—barren ordinances—unsuccessful Gospel—and cold hearts. The visible attendance nevertheless on public worship had not very greatly declined, during this space.

In the close of the month of March, and beginning of the month of April last, some hopeful symptoms of a greater regard to Religion, among a few individuals, seemed to be manifested. Here, and there, one, began to enquire, Is there any thing in religion, besides the external forms? Is not vital experimental godliness something more than mere pretence. The small beginnings grew more and more, from day to day. A great proportion of the people began to awake, as it were, into a spirit of enquiry and thoughtfulness. The appearance of the congregation was noticed, and instructions adapted to it were every sabbath attempted. Such subjects were chosen as were deemed most proper, and treated in a manner that would probably be affecting.—In this situation were things, for about three weeks. It was then judged expedient, such was the ear to hear, and so eager the desire to attend, to institute special religious meetings. This measure was adopted, after much deliberation and prayerful anxiety, because it was of such a nature

as would draw forth public attention, and occasion censure and reprehension from such as might be, in any degree, prejudiced against what is, usually, termed a revival of religion. These special religious meetings became indispensably necessary to prevent enthusiasm and disorder; and were attended beyond expectation. An air of thoughtfulness and deep concern was very visible to every one present. Through the influence of God's holy spirit, a serious enquiry "what shall I do to be saved" was among us. The special religious meetings were, more and more, crowded. They were solemn and impressive. Such as attended at first, out of idle curiosity, either soon left them, or were affected too deeply to help listening with careful attention. The people who resorted to these religious meetings, and there were in various parts of the society, five of them, in a week, became more and more anxious to hear the Gospel dispensed, and to know their duty. To the word spoken, and prayers offered, they listened with eager attention, often bathed in flowing tears from beginning to end. Such subjects were chosen, and discoursed upon as were best calculated to place truth before the mind, in the most engaging and affecting light. The object in view, in these discourses, altogether was to impress truth upon the mind—to lay all the grand and peculiar doctrines of Christ in their proper order, connexion, and extent before the hearer, and in all their weight and importance. The wish was to make them see, know, and understand the truth;

and not to move the animal affections, or natural passions of the soul : For a religion made up of the natural affections of the soul is of no worth, but often extremely dangerous.—Subjects of terror were infrequently fought ; and when treated, were not dressed up in language calculated to terrify. Divine awakening influence, in a surprizing degree, accompanied the means of grace. The Holy Spirit in his convictive power was evidently poured out, in plentiful effusions. Conscience was roused, and deep impressions of a religious nature made on many. Often forty or fifty would be most deeply affected ; and be all in tears, during the religious exercises ; and seemed as if they could not bear to have them ended. The convictions of many [the word is here used to denote the concern and anguish of the soul before the renovation of the heart] were deep and awful. They were bowed down under the weight of them. They wept plentifully under a sense of their sins of heart, thought and life :—and their exposedness, in consequence of their sins, to everlasting ruin. With God was terrible majesty. They seemed to be overwhelmed with anguish—ready to sink under their sense of their sins. Destruction from the Lord was a terror to them. They trembled at the wrath of God due to them. Their anguish of conscience—their anxiety—their distress were great beyond words to describe. They were crying out, “ What shall I do to be saved ? Where shall I look for help ? How escape the misery I deserve ? ”—Here it may be useful concisely to state the progress of the work of conviction, or

the points to which, in general, the subjects of it, were brought. For though their convictions were different in degree, in duration, and terror, yet they were alike in substance.

THE first thing of which they were convinced, was that they were guilty sinners before God; that their hearts were a fountain of evil; that their lives, though in the eye of the world free from blame, were one continued series of sin and rebellion. Numberless sins came to the mind's view, which before were either forgotten, or deemed no sins. Before being awakened they had no idea of their sinful and perishing state. It seemed strange to them that any could be so unconcerned about their sins heretofore.

AGAIN, they were convinced of the being and attributes of God. Formerly they did not realize his existence and perfections. He was not in all their thoughts. They scarcely turned one thought towards him. But passed on in life, from week to week, and year to year, stupid and heedless. The wicked through the pride of his heart will not seek after God. He seems not to be present.—He is regarded no more than though he did not exist. But now duties omitted, a God forgotten, religion neglected, a Saviour disregarded, a Gospel slighted, salvation unsought, seasons and opportunities of grace unattended, time misimproved, talents misapplied, calls of mercy unheeded are reflected upon, with horror and amazement. Now a God, whose being all creation proclaimed, a God possessed of all possible excellencies—ininitely holy, just, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, whom

they had never loved, feared, or obeyed and to whom their final account must be rendered arose to the mind's view, and produced distress inexpressible.

FURTHER, under their awakenings, they saw likewise that a holy law righteously condemned them. They felt at the same time condemned by reason. Conscience continually upbraided them. Their hearts were full of opposition to this law, in the violation of which they had always lived. They could not bear to think of its strictness and penalty. They hated the law because so strict a rule of life, demanding so much of them; and its penalty, because so severe a punishment was threatened to all disobedience or want of conformity. They had frequent risings of heart not only against God, and the Redeemer, but against the law and Gospel, and all the ways of religion, its duties, doctrines, and ordinances.

AGAIN, in the course of their awakenings, they were brought, by the strivings of the Holy Spirit, to see that the carnal mind was enmity to God and the law, to Christ and the Gospel, and Gospel salvation. They saw, most clearly, that they were wholly opposed to holiness, and a holy and sovereign God; that they had not the least degree of love to either: That they would not come to Christ for life, pardon, and help: That their hearts were hard, like the flinty rock, stubborn, and unyielding. They felt that they would not bow to a sovereign God, or accept of his offered salvation in the Gospel.—They would, in conversation, say,

“ My heart will not submit—I will hold out longer—I will still strengthen myself against God.”

At the same time their distress was overwhelming. They clearly perceived that all that stood in the way of their salvation was their own wickedness of heart—their enmity to God—their own proud rebellious hearts. They were rationally convinced, indeed and ready to assent, that God was both ready and able to save and pardon—that Christ was both able and willing to pity, hear, and bless—that he was an all-glorious, all-willing, all-suitable Saviour—that the law was ready, its honours being completely restored by a Redeemer’s sacrifice—that all heaven was ready—and all the really pious on earth wishing that they would come, and receive the water of life freely, but that their own hearts, through pride, obduracy, self-righteousness, and unwillingness would not bow or consent.

MOREOVER, their awakenings or convictions were uniformly carried so far, as to demonstrate to them, that they were in the hands of a sovereign God, who would have mercy on whom he would have mercy : That they lay altogether at uncovenanted mercy : That out of Christ, God was a consuming fire ; and that it was a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God : That he would be just, and the law just should they be left to final blindness of mind and hardness of heart, to perish forever in their sins—to treasure up wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God—to be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the

Lord and the glory of his power :—And should the smoke of their torment ascend up forever and ever, it would be no more than what strict equity required.

LASTLY, In the midst of all this distress and anguish of mind, while their hearts were rising up in opposition to God, they were brought to see, that he alone could help them—could *bring them out of an horrible pit, and set their feet upon a rock, and establish their goings* : That they lay absolutely at his omnipotent mercy, and free, rich sovereign grace : That in themselves they were helpless and hopeless—altogether dependant on an infinitely sovereign God for his grace to regenerate them—his compassion to forgive them—his goodness to bless them—and his love to save them, poor, guilty, vile, perishing transgressors. In this state, they would cry for mercy and help, like blind Bartimeus—*Jesus thou son of David have mercy on me ? Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean ! O Lord rebuke me not in thy wrath : neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger ; neither is there any rest in my bones, because of my sin.* Thus the Holy Ghost, in the use of the means of grace, the word and prayer, convinced them of sin. *And when he is come he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. Of sin because they believe not on me, of righteousness because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more. Of judgment because the Prince of this world is judged.—For I was alive without the law once : but*

when the commandment came sin revived, and I died.—For I through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.—Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts; and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the Apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do.—So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.—Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling and fell down before Paul and Silas; and brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

UNDER conviction, all had such views and impressions as above described. In some, awakenings however were more deep and awful than in others. In some they were fuller of terror than in others.—In some of a longer, in others of a shorter duration. Some remaining, for many weeks, under overwhelming distress, bordering upon despair, and in several instances, to the present time. In others, conviction seemed to perform its work, in a short space, a few days, or weeks. Compunction, and horror of conscience, in many, were exceedingly great. Some were arrested in a moment, in their mad career of sin, and made to tremble before God. They were, all at once, suddenly, from a state of stupidity and hardness of heart, wholly at ease in Zion, despising or even scoffing at religion, thrown into an agony of distress about their own everlasting salvation. Others were in a state of enquiry and thoughtfulness, for many days, or several weeks, and their convictions gradually arose. Others had, comparatively, but little horror and anguish of mind, and could not feel that distress,

and amazement, and agony of concern, as others whom they saw, and with whom they conversed. They would say often, "they wanted to have their convictions rise as high as others experienced." Many were afflicted with temptations to cast off all concern about their salvation—would wish that they had never been under any conviction. Others had no temptation to throw off their impressions—but were continually in dread lest they should lose them—relapse back into stupidity—provoke a merciful God to withdraw from them, and give them over to final blindness of mind. Some had determined that they would not be the subjects of such convictions—and thought nothing could move and affect them, as they saw others affected, but soon were brought to feel as great or greater distress of mind. As many as sixty, seventy, and eighty were under deep concern, at one time—many more thoughtful, and looking upon the scene before them, with silent solemnity. Very various were the convictions of the awakened, in many respects, and very various the occasions of them, but still all, substantially, reaching the same point. While under them, it ought to be particularly noticed, all open sins were abstained from—the holy scriptures resorted to—the sabbath spent in cries for mercy—prayer attended—the means of grace used—and opportunities to hear the word preached, painfully and diligently sought.—During the time of divine worship solemn profound reverence overspread the countenance. They heard as creatures made for eternity, who do not know but the next moment

they must account to their judge : Were melted down into tears and would ask for deliverance from misery in the bitterness of their souls.—Persons of different education—of both sexes—of all ages—the man of firm nerves, and the tender child, and the gay youth trembled under the apprehension of deserved ruin. You could not keep them from a PAINFUL and DILIGENT attendance on the means of grace. They could not hear enough of the things of God's kingdom. They were reluctant at quitting the place of religious worship.—But were each case to be detailed minutely, it would require a volume to detail the whole.

I WILL now briefly state those views, exercises, and feelings which gave them relief and hope. This is a most interesting part of the narrative. And it may not be improper here to remark, that renewing the soul after the divine image is the work of the holy spirit : *Born again not of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of blood, but of God.* Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God giveth the increase. We are his workmanship created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. Regeneration or the Gospel new birth is the implantation of a principle of supreme love to God in the soul ; is slaying the enmity of the heart against God ; is removing its opposition against divine things ; in this work the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted : The heart of stone is taken away and an heart of flesh is given : The taste,

temper, and relish of the soul is wholly changed : The heart is reconciled to God and his law : And has altogether different views, exercises, and feelings towards divine things : Now it is holy, before it was unholy : Now is turned from sin ; has a principle of benevolence, whereas before it was actuated by supreme selfishness. And such views and exercises of mind, as are now to be mentioned, were uniformly experienced, as the grounds of a hope that there was a real and sound conversion, and that religious awakenings and convictions had terminated happily.

A CLEAR, delightful refreshing sense of the being, perfections and glory of God. Every thing seemed, wherever they were, or wherever they cast their eye, to announce his existence and glory. They felt themselves surrounded with his presence. The world appeared full of the riches of his goodness and greatness. All his works, the sun, moon, and stars—the sky, the winds—the clouds—the mountains—the vallies—the productions of the earth—the revolving seasons appeared to speak in his behalf. The whole creation seemed to them to proclaim his glory—his wonderful name. And their heart seemed to go out in love, admiration, joy—delight, and praise of such a God—so holy—so wise and so gracious. His sovereignty, holiness, and righteousness they could at once admire and adore. They saw him as infinitely worthy of all love, praise, gratitude, and obedience. They felt a wish that all would ascribe to him honour, glory, blessing, and salvation—would come and see his glory—would come and

adore and praise. Such light, joy, and satisfaction had they, as to say, *whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee ; thou art the strength of my heart and my portion forever. As the hart panteth after the water-brooks so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God : when shall I come and appear before God.*

AGAIN, the law, against which they had before so many objections, appeared to them altogether in a new light. Before their hearts had risen up in enmity against the divine character, and the divine law. They hated the latter because so pure—so strict—and so rigorous as they termed it, in its penalty. Now it appears perfectly right and reasonable in all its demands, and requirements, its precepts and threatnings even of endless misery to disobedience. It appears to them holy—just—and good—worthy of its glorious author—worthy of all obedience, and to be the rule of their lives—and even glorious in condemning sin, and all opposition to God.

MOREOVER, sin as a transgression of this law, and offence committed against God, appeared to them infinitely vile and abominable, and they, as infinitely wrong, criminal, and guilty for all indulgence of it, in heart or life—secret or open. They could not describe in words sufficiently lively, how odious they appeared, in their own view, before God, the holy One who inhabits eternity. They saw and felt what guilty, unworthy creatures they were on account of sin—that they deserved for their innumerable transgressions to be cut off from the

earth—to be doomed to endless woe—to bear the wrath of Almighty God, to all eternity.

FURTHER, Christ, and his Gospel, and salvation appeared to them all-glorious. That he obeyed, suffered, and died to honour God—the divine law, and perfections and government : To condemn sin in the flesh : That his Gospel and the way of life proposed in it, while they honour God and his law, save also from the power of sin—and condemnation to eternal death were objects to them, full of joy. Such a Gospel—such a salvation—such a Saviour—such an atonement—such a righteousness—such a scheme of grace and pardoning mercy, how full of wonder ! How amiable how glorious the cross of Christ ! Here was all their hope—all their dependance for life, forgiveness, peace, and eternal blessedness. This Saviour they felt as though they could not help believing and trusting in : This Gospel they could admire and welcome : This method of deliverance from sin and misery embrace—on this atoning blood rest for pardon and acceptance with a holy and sin-hating God. Christ, in the riches of his grace and righteousness, was to them all and in all. Their help—their light—their refuge—their hope—their glory—their joy.

THE sacred volume likewise was, in their view, covered with a new glory. Before they could neglect it, from month to month, without any reproaches from their inward monitor. It lay by as an useless book, comparatively.—They hated to read it ; or if they did, for form's sake, open it, they could not understand or feel what they read.

But now it seemed new, containing new truths, and new beauties. How precious in all its calls, warnings, doctrines, promises, and instructions? They wondered they could not see it, in this light, before. Formerly it was dark and like a sealed book to them, but now all light and glory:—Formerly dull and unintelligible and uninteresting, but now pleasing and important, entertaining and interesting above description—as the PRIMARY, only rule of faith and morals.

THE duties and doctrines of religion were, also, beheld by them, in a new light. Faith and repentance seemed reasonable duties. In prayer and praise they delighted. O what a happiness and privilege to be allowed to worship God: To trust in a Redeemer's merits—to hope for pardon, adoption, justification and the favor of God! The peculiar and distinguishing doctrines of the Gospel were also all esteemed and cordially embraced. How happy to adore, serve, pray unto, and give themselves up to God!

ALL the special ordinances and institutions of the Gospel, though before disesteemed and neglected, when reflected upon, seemed full of grace, and divine wisdom and goodness, precious and important in themselves, and in the religious life, valuable above calculation. The holy sabbath, the Christian Ministry, and the two sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper, when they came to the mind's view, appeared unspeakably important.

ALL moral duties also appeared to them, when they reflected upon them, highly reasonable; and

binding on the conscience from the divine authority, and from their conduciveness to the best good of civil society; such as benevolence to man, righteousness, sobriety, temperance, humility, patience, forgiveness of injuries, love of enemies, compassion to the poor, honesty, kindness, truth, and abhorrence of all falsehood. Indeed, in their view, all the branches and duties of morality were clothed with a new beauty and glory.

UPON the whole, their hearts seemed to choose and prefer religion, the Gospel and holiness, and salvation to all temporal objects, pursuits, and interests however dear or important. They felt pleased and delighted to find that repentance, holiness, self-denial, mortification to sin, and self-abasement were the road to heavenly beatitude.

SUCH views and exercises as now stated they had uniformly, in a higher or lower degree, in a more or less clear manner—not, indeed, just in the order as now described.—In consequence of these views, their former great distress and anguish of mind gradually left them. Some degree of comfortable hope would, in a few days, arise out of such exercises and tempers, as now stated. The most, though not all, were able to ascertain the time, place and manner of the change, of which they were the subjects. The immediate effects of it were so very perceivable. Such light—peace and delightful sensations filled their minds as were unspeakable. At first, they had no idea however that what they had experienced was the new-birth or regeneration.—Several days often passed, before they

even began to admit the thought, that they had been the subjects of that great moral change. They apprehended, at length that they could see and feel the truth of such passages of holy writ as these. *You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins. For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision, avail-eth any thing nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.—Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are past away, behold all things are become new.—But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people: that ye should show forth the praise of him, who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*

AMONG the large number, who have obtained a hope of salvation, is a considerable proportion of those in a settled family-state in the world—in the meridian of life, and several somewhat advanced in life: Also a good proportion respectable for their rank in life of males as well as females, though rather more of the latter—many youth, and some quite in early youth. The work has been very general, and not limited to any age, or part of the society. The exercises and inward quiet and delight of those, who have obtained a hope, have likewise been very different. Some have had higher comfort and peace, and joy than others. Some have had much less joy and comfort. Others are unable to give any account of any deep convictions, or sensible exercises of joy, when they hope a change passed on their hearts. It may, therefore, be observed that it should satisfy all if they can say, with the blind man, “*This one thing I know that whereas I was blind, I now see.*”

AFTER having made a concise statement of facts, a few inferences of a practical nature will close the subject.

1. Is the above the nature of real evangelical piety? Is the religion of the Gospel, in its life and power, such? Must all who are really possessed of it, have such views, exercises, and tempers. No doubt they must have, in substance. There will be a mighty difference in degree, light, clearness, and knowledge, because the education, constitutional make of the mind, past life, strength of mental powers and means and opportunities of improvement are very different, in different persons. *There is a diversity of operation but the same spirit.* There must, for essence, in adults be the same convictions, same new birth—same love to God—same faith, same repentance, hope, benevolence, humility—pardon—justification—same regard to a Redeemer, to holiness—same love of morality, of duty, of ordinances. The circumstances will be very various, where the principle and temper are essentially the same. In common times, convictions are not generally so deep and awful, but of longer duration, less steady and uniform—often intermitted and then revived. And the change in regeneration is not so clear. Hope is gained more gradually.—But blind eyes must be opened; hard hearts changed; vile affections purified; and morality and virtue practised. A holy God must be loved; a Saviour believed in; sin repented of; and religion be highest in the choice, in all ages and places. If we have any religion at all, we shall prefer it to ought else.

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem to my chief joy? All of whatever communion or denomination, age or station, that have the power of godliness, have essentially the same views of, and love to divine things.

2. A GREAT and general attention to religion, among a people, is a display of the rich mercy of God. To be awakened to serious thoughtfulness about our future state, and to be brought under conviction of sin and danger is altogether reasonable, and an unspeakable blessing in divine Providence. But to be renewed in the temper of our hearts, by the power of sovereign grace, is the chief mercy, the greatest which can be conferred on us, in this life. How happy the effect and consequence of a revival of religion on church and state! For religion is the source of all spiritual peace—and lays a basis for our being happy in life, happy in death—and happy to all eternity. No wonder then that Christ says, *there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.* One sinner brought home to God and duty is a great event. *Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.* It must be pleasing to a benevolent mind to look forward, and contemplate the vast sum of human happiness which shall ultimately result from the Gospel. When one is turned from sin to holiness, is made a new creature in Christ Jesus, his

eternal happiness is secure. When numbers, in a time of general seriousness, are, a foundation is laid for a large addition to the general sum of human felicity. Religion is a subject in which the blessed above take an affectionate interest. Those benevolent spirits rejoice in the diffusion of piety among men. They love to see FRESH ACCESSIONS to the number of those who love and fear God. There is joy in heaven when one sinner repents; and greater joy when religion generally prevails, and multitudes are rising to newness of life.

3. THE guilt of open opposers or secret enemies to the prevalence of religion, we hence infer, is heinous beyond all conception. Why should any be opposers of a work of grace among a people? Nothing so much irritates many, as to see real piety and religion. They reproach all uncommon seriousness. Atheists, infidels, universalists—and other gross heretics will always oppose, revile, deny, reject, and scoff at all practical and vital piety—or any real attention among a people. They call it delusion—enthusiasm—priest-craft—and even ascribe it to satanical influence. We have had no open opposers that I know of. If any where there be any, either open opposers, or secret enemies—any revilers, blasphemers, and scoffers we should pray, as our Saviour did, *Father forgive them for they know not what they do.* At the same time, we should call none opposers or enemies, without the clearest and fullest proofs. For it is charging them with a crime of the deepest die. All are to examine candidly—and let none be inimical till they have weighed the

matter, with all possible care and deliberation. If the work be not of God, the event will prove it. If it be, to oppose it, is to oppose him. As yet we have had no Apostates—and it is earnestly hoped there will be none. If there should, it will not be strange; for there was a Judas in Christ's own family. But if one or two should relapse into former stupidity and vice, it ought not to discredit the whole work.

4. SUCH a revival of religion as above narrated, and as has been, in many towns and parishes, in this vicinity, by which thousands have been added to the Lord, and in various other parts of our land should convince unbelievers that there is a Holy-Ghost; and make them at length admit the divine original of Christianity. Every soul brought from a state of nature to a state of grace may be reckoned a new proof in confirmation of the Gospel, and also a new display of its power. When natural men, the spiritually blind, are enlightened in the knowledge of themselves and of a Saviour: When a dead sinner is raised to newness of life, we have the same signs of power, and a proof of greater goodness, in one sense, than when sun, moon, and stars were lighted up in the first world, or when a dead corpse is called into being. *God, says Paul, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;* and represents the same power that raised Jesus from the dead, as working in them that believe. If one soul thus enlightened, thus quickened sets before us a lively instance

of boundless compassion, and Almighty power, how convincing the proof when great numbers, as in the present case, are the subjects of renewing grace?

5. THE real people of God, Christians, should improve this descent of the Holy Ghost on so many places, the season past, for strengthening their faith;—and as an occasion of praise and gratitude to a merciful God. Their prayers should be more fervent. Their zeal more ardent. When God pours out his spirit, how happy the effect! A revival of religion is the consequence. This should lead them to hope more firmly in the accomplishment of all the promises of the out-pouring of the spirit, when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God, and of his Christ: And to encourage their joint supplication, that this whole land, and all the churches of Christ may be watered with the same blessed dew of heaven.

6. MINISTERS need not despond, though their labours hitherto have not been remarkably owned. They are to press on, in laying before men, the PLAIN and PECULIAR, and DISTINGUISHING doctrines of the Gospel.—God may soon bless and succeed them. At the same time all ranks, ages, and conditions should, above all, desire to feel the divine influence, and to share in the heavenly blessing. If THIS PRECIOUS SEASON OF GRACE—THIS HAPPY DAY OF GOD'S MERCIFUL VISITATION be not improved, it may never return again. Now God is striving with us by his word, by his Providence, and by his spirit. But if we continue to reject the

heavenly call, his spirit will not always strive with us. There must ere long be an end of divine patience and forbearance. The mercy-seat may soon remove, a flaming tribunal appear, and the sceptre of peace change into the sword of justice. In these awful moments, they who have despised this mercy of the Lamb, shall perish by the wrath of the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Present opportunities of attaining everlasting life, being then forever over-lost and gone, can only serve to heighten their misery, and render it more intolerable. We ought to admire also divine goodness, sovereign grace, and patience. Hath God come thus, seasonably, to his temple, by a glorious ministration of his spirit in a happy revival of religion here, and in a large number of places around us, and in various parts of our land, at a time when errors, vice, scepticism, and immorality were lamentably prevailing? And shall we not meet him with our humble praises and grateful acknowledgments? It may be said of us, as of the Jews of old, *Israel hath not been forsaken, nor Judah of his God, of the Lord of hosts though their land was filled with sin against the holy One of Israel.*—Should not so much undeserved kindness, this wonderful love melt us down into tears of godly sorrow, and bring us to a hearty confession of all our sins, whether of a personal, or more public nature. It is an endearing call to us to endeavour at a reformation of morals, and a more exalted sense of the worth of the Gospel, beginning at our own hearts and houses, that every

soul, and family, and every place may be a fit habitation of Jacob's mighty God.

LASTLY, I shall conclude with observing, that it is deeply to be lamented, that any who believe in, and revere the glorious Gospel, should ever speak reproachfully of the special operations of grace, in any general seriousness among a people, or depreciate the revival of religion, any where. Must it not be attributed, in good men, to misinformation or mistake. It is a dangerous thing to censure without proper inquiry. But when done opportunity is afforded for the exercise of Christian forbearance and sympathy :—And it should make us long for a removal to *Mount Moriah*, the land of vision above, where all the true lovers of Jesus shall dwell together in perfect unity—where no wrong views or prejudices will ever be admitted—where the whole scene of present worship shall be over, and we shall no more see darkly as through a glass but face to face—and where perfect light will lay a foundation for perfect harmony and love.

